

Message Text

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INFO AMEMBASSY ATHENS PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY ANKARA PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY NICOSIA PRIORITY

USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS PRIORITY

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C O N F I D E N T I A L LONDON 14479

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PFOR, EAIR, CY, UK, TU

SUBJECT: AEROFLOT OFFER AND NICOSIA AIRPORT

REF: NICOSIA 3873

SUMMARY: BRITISH ARE CONTINUING TO PRESS FOR CYPRIOT ACCEPTANCE OF BMA OFFER WHILE NOTING DIFFICULTIES ON THE GROUND IN GETTING ANY AIRSTRIPS OPERATIONAL. THOUGH STILL PESSIMISTIC, THEY HOPE FOR SOME MOVEMENT ON NICOSIA AIRPORT AS RESULT OF THEIR OWN AND USG REPRESENTATIONS TO ANKARA. THEY SUGGEST ANY ACCEPTANCE OF AEROFLOT OFFER BY GREEK CYPRIOTS COULD TRIGGER TURKISH REACTION WHICH WOULD SET BACK PROSPECTS FOR CYPRUS SETTLEMENT. END SUMMARY.

1. BRITISH HAVE INSTRUCTED HICOMER OLVER TO SEE CHRISTOPHIDES OR CLERIDES AGAIN AND PRESS FOR ACCEPTANCE OF BMA OFFER STATING HE IS DOING SO ON INSTRUCTIONS.

2. BRITISH AIRWAYS (WHICH HAS AN INTEREST IN CYPRUS
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AIRWAYS) HAS INFORMED FCO THAT AS OF A WEEK AGO WORK HAD

STOPPED ON YEROSKIPOS AIRSTRIP (REFTEL). REASON WAS TURKS HAD LET IT BE NOISED ABOUT THAT THEY WOULD BOMB THE AIRSTRIP IF REPAIR WORK CONTINUED. AIRSTRIP IS IN VERY ROUGH SHAPE, AND FCO OFFICIALS POSIT THAT ONE CAN NOT RULE OUT TURKISH BOMBARDMENT IF EFFORTS TO REPAIR IT ARE RESUMED PRIOR TO ANY ARRIVAL THERE OF SOVIET AIRCRAFT. THIS INFORMATION WAS BEING PASSED TO HICOMER OLVER LATE NOVEMBER 5.

3. FCO ALSO CORRECTING SOME OF INFORMATION OLVER USED WITH CLERIDES (WHICH PROBABLY OBTAINED LOCALLY FROM BRITISH MILITARY). RANGE OF YAK-40 WITH FULL PASSENGER LOAD IS ESTIMATED AT 820 NAUTICAL MILES. WHILE IT MIGHT REQUIRE SIX MONTHS TO COMPLETE WORK ON LARNACA AIRSTRIP AT NORMAL PACE, WORK COULD BE SPEEDED UP IF NECESSARY AND TIME CUT BY HALF OR MORE. GRADER STARTED WORK ON AIRSTRIP NOVEMBER 4.

4. REAL PROBLEM CONTINUES TO BE NICOSIA AIRPORT. PLANES AND AIRPORT EQUIPMENT ARE DETERIORATING THERE AS WINTER APPROACHES AND MAY EVENTUALLY BE TOTAL LOSS. GOODISON REMARKED TO GREEK AMBASSADOR ROUSSOS NOVEMBER 4 THAT HE COULD NOT ESCAPE THE SUSPICION AEROFLOT OFFER BEING USED BY GREEK CYPRIOTS TO BUILD UP PRESSURE FOR OPENING NICOSIA AIRPORT. ROUSSOS DID NOT REPLY. BRITISH WILL WELCOME ANY HELP WE CAN GIVE IN GETTING TURKISH AGREEMENT TO PERMIT UN (BRITISH) REPAIR OF NICOSIA AIRPORT AND ACCESS TO ABANDONED AIRCRAFT THERE. THEY HOPE THIS COULD LEAD TO AGREED REOPENING, THOUGH THEY REMAIN PESSIMISTIC.

5. FCO CONTINUES TO DENY USE OF AKROTIRI IS POSSIBLE ALTERNATIVE. THIS IS CLEARLY FOR POLITICAL REASONS, AS CHRISTOPHIDES APPARENTLY HAS SENSED (NICOSIA 3889).

6. GOODISON AND OTHER FCO OFFICIALS SUGGESTED TO US NOVEMBER 5 THAT SOME THOUGHT MIGHT PROFITABLY BE GIVEN TO WHAT MIGHT HAPPEN IF GREEK CYPRIOTS ACCEPTED AEROFLOT OFFER. AS A STARTER, THEY SUGGESTED TURKS MIGHT USE THIS DEVELOPMENT TO PAINT GOC AS COMMUNIST-ORIENTED AND BECOME EVEN MORE INTRANSIGENT ON TERMS OF SETTLEMENT. CONCEIV-
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ABLY TURKS COULD USE NATO SECURITY AS PRETEXT FOR TAKING ACTION SUCH AS SEIZURE OF LARNACA AND/OR BOMBARDING YEROSKIPOS AIRSTRIP, AS MENTIONED ABOVE. THRUST OF FCO COMMENTS WAS THAT GREEK CYPRIOTS MIGHT BE PLAYING WITH A DOUBLE-EDGED THREAT.

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